

This Old House

A vibrant kitchen scene featuring teal upper cabinets, a stainless steel microwave and oven, yellow lower cabinets, and a wooden dining table with a bowl of lemons.

**Dress up
a deck
Build a
fire pit
Redo
your
porch
Replace
a roof**

Get happy!

**Cheery colors
and charming
details to bring
home now**

A black GMC Sierra pickup truck is shown from a front-three-quarter view, driving on a paved road. The truck features a large chrome grille with the GMC logo, chrome bumpers, and multi-spoke alloy wheels. The background shows a hilly landscape under a clear sky.



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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/STEFAN L. SCHNEIDER



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on the cover



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How to reach us

E-mail the editors at letters@thisoldhouse.com or write to: This Old House magazine, 262 Porter St., Norwood, CT 06854.

• Include your full name, address, and phone number. Published letters are edited for clarity and length.

DOING IT RIGHT really matters to This Old House readers. That common thread ran through much of the feedback we received on our March/April 2017 issue. With a deep appreciation for historically accurate detail and an eagle eye for safety, you keep us on our toes—and we wouldn't have it any other way.

Blending old and new

"Roadside Attraction" (March/April 2017) brought back memories of the 1890s Philadelp[hi]a home where I grew up. My parents worked hard to preserve as much of the original home as possible. I imagine my children when the new owners e-mailed us photos of their "improvements." All the intricate mahogany woodwork was painted over with white paint, and the original chandeliers were replaced with recessed lighting. I hope someday the house will have owners who, perhaps inspired by This Old House, will restore it as lovingly as my parents did.

—MATT BAUGH, COTTAGE GROVE, OH

Just wow

The Dulles 1890s house ("Have to Stay" March/April 2017) has amazing detail. I can't wait to see the finished version. The view of Detroit is awesome! In the rough, 2000s would look for more of these gems.

—TWYLA BURGER, ROLLING HILLS ESTATES, CA

Safety first

"Home Inspectors: DIY Don'ts" (Home Solutions, March/April 2017) describes home ownership projects that do not meet code. Yet in the same issue, you show a basement ("Hidden Gem") without simple notations that, as a contractor, I could not help but notice. There's no star rating; the steps don't look to code, and I don't see a GFCI outlet by the sink. You have a great and informative magazine; please don't encourage these kinds of code violations by featuring them.

—ANTHONY MARINO, LEONARD, VA

Correction

• Put Your Sawblower to Bed! (Home Solutions, March/April 2017) recommended filling your tank with ethanol-free fuel. This should have read: ethanol-free fuel. We regret the error.



Real-life Photoshop redo

—BRANDY HUFF, MILAN, MI

Thank you all so much for giving us the boost needed to make our house attractive again (Photoshop redo, September 2015). We have had so many people stop by and tell us how great the house looks. My favorite comment is: "You have taken an old house that was in disrepair and made it beautiful!"



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25

[illegible]

home solutions Edited by Neil Vapian

Edited by Paul Maguire

INSIDE

BANISHING ANTS

OLD-SCHOOL PAINTS

MIXING WOOD AND TILE

MORE



Sheds above the rest

Here's before and after proof that a few simple upgrades can turn a ho-hum outdoor dining area into a relaxing focal point. Concretenessy's July 11-14-16 post garden shed can have a gravel plot in Tushnet, Maine. Kitchen designer Robin Amore changed the exterior color scheme and tied the structure into the landscape with overhanging raised beds during the time. As if that weren't cool enough, she added a deck on the shed's shady side - a nice change for hanging. Functional-but-forgetful how the shed stand made for a nice to see on it. It's a wonder the overhanging area from her break-out.



4444 J. Neurosci., September 24, 2008 • 28(39):11439–11448

Ants! There oughta be a law

These perps may be building a home inside yours. Presenting three frequent intruders, and what to do when they come calling

Know your enemy They all have six legs, eight pairs of antennae and oval bodies called gasteres.

Carpenter ants are big, black, sometimes reddish-brown. Like termites, they can do a lot of damage to wood and of course, they like to eat wood. Unlike termites, which are wood-eaters, carpenter ants burrow through wood, leaving tunnels and chambers. They're also known for eating wood.

Odorous house ants are much smaller, running from brown to black, they throw off a rotten-coconut-scent when crushed. These perpetrators hide out in walls and floors, and while they do love sweets (and are often referred to as sugar ants), they will go for any food and water they can find. Foragers leave a scented trail to help nestmates find their way, so watch for seeing a few heading for the box of dog treats. **Pavement ants** tend to settle in concrete cracks and will also move into walls, under floors, or into mulch near foundations. Light brown to black, they're also a swarming season. They'll visit your bread crumbs but prefer grease and meat.

Why they move in All three crave human food and water and access to



water. Carpenter ants are drawn to rotting wood while the other two types search for accessible water and a steady supply of ant-sized food debris they can carry away.

What to do Trap foragers in a sticky, nearly empty honey trap. Sprinkle ant pathways in dry areas with diatomaceous earth or pyrethrin acid dust. Toss

odorless ant-bait baits in nest areas with a vacuum cleaner—then wipe down trails with soapy water to throw them off their scent. Bait can turn foragers into poison makes but can also become a traffic jam. Now do a deep clean (is that a T we behind the seat?). Carpenter ants are tricky. If you've got these chameleons, or any ant that won't take a bait, call a pro. —CHRISTINE SULLIVAN



A real tweeter

This ceramic bird holds a Bluetooth speaker and LEDs, making it a great patio guest. Flip up a playbill on your smartphone, and a woofer in the walnut base bounces sound off the bird's tail, creating a stereo effect when joined by a tweeter in the lightbulb. Expect about 15 hours of run time per charge, but don't leave this featherless friend out overnight; it can't handle damp weather. JinGo Bird Cage Speaker Light, \$295; store.moma.org —SAL VAGLIA

Shady headspace

When the UV index soars, unprotected skin starts to burn in as little as 15 minutes. Sunscreen is fine as far as it goes, and you could always give up gardening in daylight, but better would be donning a deep-limbed hat with generous neck protection, made from nylon with a UV protection factor above 50. The flap tucks up if you want to cool off; the crown has air vents and cinches for a comfortable fit, and the chin strap is useful when the wind picks up—if not in the vegetable patch then maybe the next time you cross the desert. Adventure Hat in Everglade, \$39; sundaysafternoons.com —E.E.



New charm with old paints

Long before coatings came in cans, Daffers painted their walls with lustrous matte finishes that were non-toxic, didn't need primer, and didn't off-gas VOCs. If our types are still sold today, and despite their unique attributes and offbeat ingredients, they generally cost no more than premium latex.



Milk paint

What's in it: Powdered milk protein (casein), lime, and earth pigments, yanked in milk-water.

Great for: Brick, stone, and raw wood, indoors or out.

Magic properties: Has unique heat that changes with the light, can be used on masonry, on wood, fights rot, insects, and fire, unaffected by moisture, and durable—right coats should last 60 years.

Cons: Most types won't work on drywall, painted wood, or metal, will show fingerprints and water spots if not sealed.

Find it at: milkpaint.com; milkpaint.com



Lime wash

What's in it: The best grades contain aged high-calcium lime, partly and partly pigments.

Great for: Brick, stone, and raw wood, indoors or out.

Magic properties: Silicate paints form an incredibly durable chemical bond with masonry; some have lasted outside more than 120 years.

Cons: Each coat needs a day to dry, not suited to bodywork or painted surfaces.

Find it at: jheritagewe.com



Silicate paint

What's in it: Potassium silicate (a type of liquid glass), feldspar, and earth pigments.

Great for: Brick, stone, concrete, plaster, and drywall, indoors and out.

Magic properties: Silicate paints form an incredibly durable chemical bond with masonry; some have lasted outside more than 120 years.

Cons: Very hard to remove, and won't stick to wood.

Find it at: jheritagewe.com



Clay paint

What's in it: Clay, plant-based binders, and earth pigments.

Great for: Concrete, raw plaster, and drywall, indoors and outdoors.

Magic properties: Clay is a velvety texture that absorbs noise, odors, and humidity.

Cons: May 1 work in baths and showers (too much moisture), easily stained and dented, needs night hours between coats.

Find it at: earthpigment.com; earthpigment.com —THOMAS BRADY

Stop garage break-ins

From a burglar's point of view, an attached garage can mean access to the entire house, even if an automatic door opener keeps it locked up tight. A whole-house security system is your best safeguard, but these DIY moves can also help defeat intruders at this potential entry point.



Keep your eyes peeled for a burglar's entry point in the middle of your door handles (photo.com)

Block the door. Every garage door opener has a cord that, when pulled, disconnects the automated door from the chain, or belt, so you can manually lift it in an emergency. Burglars can yank this cord from outside by fishing a coil hanger between the top of the door and the trim. Keep them from reaching the rope with a metal strapplate screwed to the belt like Garage Shield (thegarageshield.com), shown here.



Hide the remote. Many people park outside with the garage-door remote control attached conveniently to the car. If a thief gets hold of it—and many do—getting into the house is simple. If you don't park in the garage, then keep the remote in the house with the car keys in a device like the universal MyQ system (myqautomation.com), which uses a smartphone app to operate the garage door.

Add padlocks inside. Engaging the garage-door lock should prevent burglars from opening the door, but it's not a physical deterrent. And, sadly, standard interior locks are vulnerable to picking. Before leaving on vacation, try this hack: Attach your keys on a wire track just above the rollers—you may need to drill holes through the track to accommodate the tracklets. The door won't budge, but when you return, don't forget to remove the lock before trying to open it—H



Blending wood and tile in an open plan



Spaces like the one above (by Susan Kretzler/Jasper) renovator Melissa McGonigle to go for the no-threshold look in her Austin, Texas, house. We asked her how she matched tile and hardwood.

LEVEL THE SUBFLOOR FIRST. Melissa's tile contractor accidentally ran in as where relatively flat tile met a relatively thick floorboard by using cement board and mortar to build up the area under the tile.

CHOOSE AN OUT-OF-THE-BOX SHAPE. The contractor laid out a staggered, irregular pattern of 12-by-12-inch tiles and squares, and six irregular tiles gave the irregular border an intentional look. Melissa's tile wholesaler plays up the free-flowing transition to wood. After laying out her tile pattern on the floor, Melissa snapped a photo for her installer to follow. As the tiles went in, floorboards were cut to fit around them.

MATCH THE FINISH. Melissa signed for matte tile and a matte floor finish to help unify dissimilar materials—H

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Welcoming front porch for \$286

A little paint and some seating transform a neglected entry area into a charming outdoor room. BY KATELIN HILL



BEFORE: The porch was in bad shape when the homeowners moved in, and it required a lot of sweeping and mending before it could be repainted.

AFTER: The family now uses the space as an extra room where they can hang out, read, and play board games when the weather is nice.

SOMETIMES INCREASING a home's living space is as simple as tapping into unused square footage. When Katie and John Goldworthy began renovating their 1904 Craftsman house in Spokane, Washington, they wanted more room for their family of nine or guests. Katie saw potential in the run-down front porch and started as overhauled by painting every surface. She used specially formulated porch paint to cover large stains on the floor, opting for a lighter shade of her home's gray exterior coupled with white noche patterns would be overwhelming. A fresh coat of yellow on the door

locked off the overall color scheme. To make the space feel like an indoor room, she loaded it up with seating. Katie used spray paint to freshen up faded outdoor furniture that the family already owned, re-covered existing cushions and pillows with yard-sale and scrap fabric, then accented with new lighting, candles, and potted plants.

Now Katie, who blogs at www.katiehill.com, frequently receives compliments on the makeover from her neighbors, and her whole family loves hanging out in the comfortable open-air space. As she says, "It's amazing what some paint and fresh flowers can do!" ■

THE PROJECT TALLY

Glazed, striped and stenciled the dark lacquer painting light gray and white stripes on the wood floor. Then gave the front door a coat of yellow. **\$110**

Spray painted existing outdoor furniture and re-covered the cushions, covered existing stool outdoors for flexible outdoor seating. **\$20**

Purchased new plants for seating. Flowers, pots, and planters. **\$60**

Spent a new outdoor rug on sale. **\$80**

Added extra lighting with candles, an outdoor chandelier and set of string lights she decorated with lights of fabric scraps. **\$36**

TOTAL \$286

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The henna treatment

Embellish a deck platform with chalky matte paint, semitransparent stain, and a freehand mandala. BY DEBRAH BAILEY

NO ONE SAYS you have no paint the way a deck or entryway can't about being able to draw like da Vinci. This freehand mandala is designed for relaxation, while you put it down as well as after. It was created by Britney Bailey, who blogs at prettyhandygirl.com. After finishing breakfast with a platform deck, its board-mounted at a diagonal design, Bailey composed "an exotic station," as she put it. She scooped for a mandala-like pattern online, then grabbed chalk, sealer, paint, and a tape measure. Starting with a center point about two feet from the most prominent corner, she described a half-dozen concentric circles, each a little further out from the last. After that, she says, "a lot of doodling" ensued—and so more of it.

One key, Bailey says, is to restrain the deck and use the same product as a protective top coat. (She used Thompson's WaterSeal in Semi-Transparent Acqua Brown.) Also, get a friend to help. Bailey assigned her sister. "Our goal was to make the deck a gateway, to transport you to India," she says. Even if it doesn't get you that far, when a mandala meets a fab-hung people, you're well on your way to a good reason to stay home.



PAINTED OUTDOOR FLOORS

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Indoor-outdoor rugs

On your deck or in your dining room, patterned carpets that clean up with a sponge (or even a garden hose) are as practical as they are pretty

BY KATE WOOD • PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA SHIN

AS OUTDOOR LIVING spaces evolve higher and higher on remodelers' wish lists, all-weather furnishings that add midsize-level comfort are more in demand than ever. Unrolling an area rug made from hard-wearing synthetic fibers is an easy way to anchor a space and make it feel like a room, even if it's in the middle of your yard. Their modernism also makes these rugs handy indoors, especially in high-traffic areas such as mudrooms and family rooms, or spill-prone zones like dining rooms and kids' spaces. Best of all, they come in an inspiring range of colors and designs. Here, 13 options to make your feet into



1 > tropical leaves

ARTICLE HOME
Made of Hand-hooked polypropylene
Size: 4'10" x 6' L
Highlights: Versatile design
Available at: articlehome.com

2 > sea life

THURGOOD
Made of Polypropylene
Size: 3'6" x 7' L
Highlights: This fun pattern features a fun yet sophisticated octopus
Available at: target.com

3 > bold floral

SAVINGS
Made of Hand-hooked polypropylene
Size: 3'6" x 5'6" L
Highlights: Pop Art styling
Available at: homedepot.com





4 > bright star

REYNOLDS
Made of Recycled
polypropylene
Size: 4'6" x 6'4"
Highlights: In addition to
being reversible, this
Moroccan inspired rug
has extra UV protection
\$179 reynolds.com

5 > cool kilim

POTTERY BARN
Made of Handwoven
recycled polyester
Size: 3'6" x 5'4"
Highlights: This sandy
Red moroccan kilim
USA—can Effort And the
digger is hand dyed
\$150 potterybarn.com

6 > rich texture

BEAVER
Made of Polypropylene
Size: 3'2" x 5'3"
Highlights: A combination
of woven and cut pile
plays up the floor's dramatic
pattern and gives the
rug a luxurious feel
\$200 beaver.com

7 > neutral gear

ALCOTT HILL
Made of Handwoven
polyester
Size: 4'6" x 5'7"
Highlights: Inspired with
everything natural tones.
This shag texture is a
contemporary take on
the Oriental carpet
\$67 seelyear.com

8 > pattern play

JAPIN
Made of Handwoven
polyester
Size: 3'7" x 5'8"
Highlights: This sandy
Southwestern style
but more is surprisingly
soft to the touch
\$200 japin.com

9 > blue ombre

SEARCHWEST HOME
Made of Handwoven
polypropylene and acrylic
Size: 3'7" x 5'8"
Highlights: The plush
textured texture looks great
under foot, plus the pat-
tern adds UV resistance
\$105 searchwest.com

10 > chic chevron

CAPELL BROS
Made of Cotton
Size: 3'11" x 5'6"
Highlights: The bold
pattern of this Red woven
rug is easy to pull off
in muted shades of
green and teal
\$150
capellbros.com

11 > geometric

FAHLETT
Made of Handwoven
polypropylene
Size: 3'6" x 5'4"
Highlights: Made from
recycled olefin fibers,
this reversible rug (light
+ orange) looks like a
piece
\$137 fahlett.com

12 > double take

KALLEN
Made of Handwoven
polyester
Size: 3'6" x 5'4"
Highlights: Flip over
the reversible green and
orange pattern for a
surprisingly different
look
\$270 kallen.com

13 > new classic

COLONY MILLS
Made of Recycled
polypropylene
Size: 3'6" x 5'4"
Highlights: Usually seen
in wool, this Red design
is a lovely update of an
oriental pattern style
\$180 colonymills.com

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collections—some you
can't not miss

Tomato time

From meaty beefsteaks to teeny cherries, this summer staple comes in a rainbow array of sizes and shapes. Here, tips for growing success, plus recipes to enjoy

BY SAI VASUDEVAN • RECIPES BY SUZIE QUICK • PHOTOGRAPHS BY KRISTINA KILG

FOR SEASONED gardeners, who likely started seeds long ago, planting a homegrown tomato is proof that summer has truly arrived. But even novices—and procrastinators—with a few starter plants from the local nursery are only weeks away from getting in on the busy seasonal reward. Just consider some important basics before you buy.

Full-flavored, multicolored heirloom tomatoes are enjoying a resurgence, so garden centers should have a nice seedling selection of these true-toad plants. Defined as open-pollinated varieties grown prior to 1940, heirlooms are prized for superior taste, but some can take a long time to fruit. Hybrids developed after 1940 are touted for their improved disease resistance and bigger yields.

While the tomato family includes thousands of varieties, there are six main types. Large, heavy beefsteaks can be heirlooms or hybrids (like 'Big Boy') and reach a pound or more. At 6 ounces or so, round globe tomatoes, such as 'Lemon Boy,' are medium size. Strawberry-shaped cherries, including 'Amarillo Prince,' are a little-known group with few seeds. Pale, oval saladettes, like 'Black Prince,' are symmetrical and easily garnished. San Marzano fall into the Roma, or paste, category and are often preserved in jars. Tiny cherry, grape, and pear tomatoes have bright, tight skins and sweet flesh.

To maximize your growing space, consider a planter firm. Bush determinate varieties, like 'Sweet 'n' Sour,' are smaller bodied,



where they can reach 3 feet high, bearing fruit in a four-to-six-week window before decking. Larger beds have room for indeterminate, or vining, tomatoes, such as 'Early Girl,' which can grow 6 feet tall or more, with a sporadic yield until frost. Semideterminates, like 'Celebrity,' fall in between. They're not as big as vining tomatoes but they produce until frost. Dwarf determinates, like 'Patio,' and smaller vining types, like 'Tiny Tiny Cherry Red,' work well in containers, with support.

Knowing your tomato-growing season—the weeks with daytime temperatures around 80°F, evenings about 65°F, and soil temps above 60°F—is vital when picking tomato plants. Check the planter tags for the days to maturity, an estimate of how long it's been since seedling needs to produce fruit. The range is between 50 and 90 days, with the larger heirlooms taking the longest. The numbers also clearly which varieties are early, mid, or late season—helpful for staggering the harvest from multiple plants.

Store-bought plants should be about 6 to 10 inches tall and free of flowers or fruit. In containers or in the ground, all transplanted tomatoes have the same light and soil requirements: eight hours of full sun, with afternoon shade in very hot climates, and rich, well-drained soil. Use a pH soil test kit (about \$10 at home centers) and amend soil as needed until the results are between 6.0 and 6.8.

To plant, dig holes 12 inches deep, if possible, and backfill with amended soil, cover two-thirds of the stem, leaving leaves from the buried stem as you go. This encourages new roots to sprout, enabling the plant to absorb water and fertilizer faster. Tomatoes 1½ to 3 feet apart for air circulation, discouraging leaf mold and blight. Stake or cage tomatoes, even bush varieties, right after transplanting to keep fruit clean and lessen the chance of disease. Add a 3- to 4-inch thick layer of organic mulch at the base four weeks after planting to moderate soil moisture, block weeds, and keep splashing water from carrying leaf spot from the soil to the leaves.

Most tomatoes need two feedings of a balanced 5-10-10 or 3-10-10 fertilizer added when the green fruit is about the size of a golf ball and again when the first tomato is ripe. Avoid overfeeding, which forces bushy growth without any additional fruit. Container plants need more feeding, about every 10 days. Keep the soil consistently moist by adding 1 to 1½ inches of water per week if not supplied by rain; the prevents fruit from swelling and splitting after a heavy rain. Pick ripe tomatoes while they are firm, with fully developed color.

Then head to the kitchen! Of course, some recipes no make the most of all that beautiful bounty.



THE RECIPES

5-Minute Cherry Tomato Sauce

MAKES ENOUGH FOR 1 POUND OF PASTA

This is a versatile sauce for pasta to which you can add chopped artichoke hearts or chopped olives/olives and capers. Toss the sauce with freshly cooked pasta and garnish. Parsley is optional.

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 pint-size cherry tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt

- ¼ teaspoon granulated sugar
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- 8 large basil leaves, whole or finely sliced
- Freshly ground pepper

In a large, deep nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium heat until it is hot but not smoking. Add the cherry tomatoes, garlic, sugar, and pepper flakes. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring and mashing tomatoes with a fork until just tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in the basil and season with salt and pepper to taste.



Southern Tomato Pie

SERVES 4 AS A MAIN COURSE

Use your favorite piecrust recipe for a round piecrust for the savory pie for tomato lovers. Add to a variety of tomatoes and herbs for a more colorful pie.

Preheat oven to 375°F for a 9-inch pie plate. Roll out dough to fit the pie plate. Blind-bake for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and cool.

- 2 1/2 cups packed fresh herbs (such as basil, chives, parsley, and thyme)
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan, plus more for topping the pie
- 1/2 cup freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup freshly ground black pepper

- 1/2 cup freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 375°F. Press the dough into a 9-inch pie plate. Trim the dough to 1/2 inch above the rim of the pie plate. Fold the overhanging dough under itself along the rim of the pie plate. Chill 30 minutes or until firm. Roll out a 12-inch round. Roll the dough and rolling the edges so it looks homemade. Use the piecrust to wrap a large square of parchment paper. Roll with a rolling pin. Lay the parchment paper on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes. Remove the parchment paper. Return the piecrust to the oven and bake another 10 minutes, until the crust is light golden brown. Cool completely on a wire rack about 30 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F.

Prep the filling by placing the tomatoes in a single layer on paper towels, sprinkle lightly with salt. Let stand 30 minutes to drain. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat and cook the onion 3 to 5 minutes, until tender. Season with salt and pepper. Put the tomatoes in a bowl. Reserve about 1/2 cup of the tomatoes for the top layer. Fill the piecrust with alternating layers of the remaining tomatoes, onion, mozzarella, and ricotta cheese. Sprinkle with a little pepper. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes or until lightly browned. Check pie edges at the 30-minute mark for browning and cover edges with foil to prevent further browning. Serve hot warm or at room temperature.

Heirloom Tomato Salad

SERVES 6

VINAIGRETTE

- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, minced or ground with a garlic press
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

SALAD

- 4 large ripe heirloom tomatoes (or 4 pounds of smaller mixed varieties)
- 2 ears fresh corn
- 1 cup minced peeled or fresh cheese
- 1 cup thinly sliced onion, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup fresh leaves, whole or cut into strips
- 3 tablespoons minced chives

Mix together the vinaigrette ingredients in a small bowl.

Core and cut each tomato crosswise into 4 thick slices. Season corn 2 to 3 minutes until just slightly tender. Remove kernels by running a knife down the sides.

Place one tomato slice on each of 4 plates. Drizzle with a third of the vinaigrette. Top with 1/4 cup cheese and onion. Sprinkle with corn kernels and fresh leaves. Continue layering the ingredients, ending with a tomato slice, herbs and cheese to garnish. Let marinate at least 15 minutes at room temperature before serving.



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Roasted Tomato, Brown-Sugar Bacon, and Mozzarella Sandwich

MAKES 2 SANDWICHES

This is a deluxe treat on the classic BLT. You can halve all the tomatoes and the bread.

- 1 ripe plum tomatoes, split lengthwise
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt
- 16 panned bacon, thickly sliced
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- sliced thick Tuscan-style bread
- 2 ounces fresh mozzarella, thickly sliced
- Peek infuse leaves

In a bowl, toss the tomatoes with the oil and 1 to 2 pinches of salt. Place cut-side down in roasting dish and set to de.

Place 2 racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat to 400°F. Line a large baking sheet with foil, then top with a large baking rack. Arrange the bacon slices in a single layer on the rack. Sprinkle evenly with the brown sugar. Place the tomatoes on the upper rack and the tomatoes on the lower rack. Roast the tomatoes for 10 minutes; the skins should be blistered and the flesh will firm to the touch. Continue baking the bacon until crisp about 15 to 20 minutes longer.

Pull off the skins and keep the tomatoes warm. Lightly toast the bread and brush one side with olive oil. Arrange the bacon on 2 pieces of toast and stack up. Top with tomato halves, then the slices of cheese. Drizzle the cheese with the olive oil and add the infuse leaves. Top with the remaining sliced bread, add sides down. Cut sandwiches that delicious! ■

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Front porches
entire full-width
porch with
lace-like trim
are signatures
of the style.

Pretty classic

Victorian-era farmhouses offer space, easy living, and a frilly facade, whether they sit on sprawling acreage or on the outskirts of town. BY PAMELA GUYH KROWE

YOU MIGHT SEE IT as a single country house, just dressed up a bit. Or as a modest Queen Anne or Gothic Revival that has gone easy on the ornament. The Victorian-era farmhouse, built as the main residence on agricultural lands, blends the plain vernacular, or folk, house forms of the rural landscape with decorative finishes and past-drawn design elements found elsewhere on city dwellings.

As roads stretched into small towns and agrarian areas in the mid- to late 1800s, they brought with them affordable, ready-to-install factory-made wood trim. The basic spindlework, ovaling brackets, and round balusters, previously crafted by hand, were being produced by sawmills and widely dispersed, winding up on farmhouse facades countrywide. Most were inflexible L- and T-shaped houses wrapped in clapboards, some were great imitations of their sister cousins, with a bay window here, a pointed arch there.

Unlike the grander styles of the period, the farmhouse generally does without turrets, spires, and decorative ridges. Ornamentation mainly decorates up the porch and the corner line, where roof meets wall. Flat gables or ornate spindlework spindlers are common, extending the full length of the porch; posts are raised or square with chamfered edges. Decorative brackets often soften the transition between the two. Frost-facing gables may be cantilevered and are frequently adorned with decorative iron at the top. Windows are tall—spread to channel a summer breeze—with simple casings.

Today, these houses draw buyers looking for uncluttered space, ease, and function. Solidly built and unpretentious, with recent-placed floor plans, they adapt to modern lifestyles as easily as they did to working farms over a century ago. Here, some examples for sale across the country.

Overlook 620 acre farm—and its bath, workshop, and chicken coop—on 100-acre lot in this Centralville, IL, five-bedroom house built in 1907 with 4,328 square feet of living space. It has original pine floors, a stone shed roof, and oil-line systems. Listed at \$419,900. Contact: Susan Mendenhall, Realty Executives, 217-204-5800.



NEWINGTON, MA, \$339,900
Details: 3 beds, 3 baths, 1,880 sq. ft., built in 1990
Highlights: Fully renovated, updated electrical and plumbing, large unfinished basement, attached garage, 26-acre lot, in town
Contact: Dee Madonia, Coldwell Banker, 617-834-3524



RICHLAND, IN, \$249,900
Details: 4 beds, 3 baths, 2,720 sq. ft., built in 1907
Highlights: Original-pine floors, a hardwood staircase, stone fireplace, kitchen, 13 acres with chicken coop, barn, built-in trees
Contact: Brandon Kasper, Keller Williams, 317-457-8700



WARR, MO, \$699,000
Details: 4 beds, 3 baths, approx. 6,900 sq. ft., built in 1879
Highlights: 12 lead ceilings, matching tin ceiling, 4 fireplaces, central A/C, 4-acre with 100-year-old trees, 40-foot-wide house
Contact: Margaret Clark, Berkshire Hathaway Home, 660-353-2080



LAKEVILLE, CT, \$199,000
Details: 3 beds, 2 1/2 baths, 2,432 sq. ft., built in 1990
Highlights: Hardwood floors, stone fireplace and moldings, workshop, upstairs laundry, 3-acre with stone walls, stone kitchen
Contact: Julie Moore, Elyse Hervey Real Estate, 860-460-0546



BRENNHAM, TX, \$588,000
Details: 3 beds, 4 baths, 3,157 sq. ft., built in 1903
Highlights: Beautifully styled, 2-story, built-in stone porch, limestone white color, additional enclosed pool, 3 acres with horse/guest quarters
Contact: Savannah Guillot, Market Realty, 979-377-4556



LANCASTER, KY, \$900,800
Details: 4 beds, 3 baths, 3,160 sq. ft., built in 1899
Highlights: Original pine floors, 8 fireplaces, updated HVAC, wood-burning, 142-acre working field in horseback, 40-foot-wide house
Contact: Julie Waples, Keller Williams, 606-548-3056

Now hear this

Voice-activated digital assistants can handle an increasing number of helpful tasks at home. Are you ready for your house to talk back to you? BY MATTHEW WICE

AMAZON ECHO, a voice-activated smart speaker, has emerged as a surprise hit since its debut in late 2014, thanks to its poppy responses and a remarkable ability to pick up commands even when spoken casually from across the room. The standard Echo is a 9.25-inch-tall cylinder that plugs into a power outlet and connects to the Internet over your home Wi-Fi, with sensitive microphones that listen all the time for a magic "wake word" that summons responses. Ask, "Alexa, what's in the news?" and Echo promptly responds with a flash briefing from, say, NPR.

Echo's growing number of "skills" includes playback of podcasts, streaming radio, audiobooks, and music, providing basic trivia and math answers, and control of smart lighting and compatible home devices such as a lock on the front door. Most of Echo's smarts actually live in Amazon's powerful cloud computers, so new capabilities don't require a software update in the home hardware. Alexa can even host a "Jeopardy!" session. No surprise that Echo makes happy to help you shop from Amazon ("Alexa, reorder toothpaste").

Alexa's main rival—Apple's Siri, Google Assistant, and, to a lesser extent, Microsoft's Cortana—have their own strengths. For one thing, they are more integrated into smartphones for on-the-go compute.

Consider Amazon, though, for showing us all that the ambient, shared presence in a room of the smart home, dedicated speaker can be so convenient. "Alexa, what's the weather?" booms part of the morning breeze when getting dressed. Drop plans to boiling water and oatmeal, "Alexa, set a timer for 10 minutes," or "Alexa, play soul music" when enjoying the dishwasher or setting the table. Kids



1) Amazon Echo, \$180

On the left is our top-rated digital assistant for the home works from anywhere in a room and is regularly adding new skills—Alexa play Jeopardy! The Echo Dot (\$50) has a smaller speaker (and works out to comparable on-brand) but otherwise is the same as its larger sibling. Limited to the U.S., the U.K., and Germany—for now. amazon.com/echo

squall with delight ("Alexa, play knock-knock") and even teach classics who ultimately ban the robot conversations (and, surprisingly, Internet-connected microphones) from their homes right at home by a little voiced by the hands-free capabilities. Amazon has also introduced smaller, less expensive versions of Echo to extend its presence throughout the home and on a availability through other devices using Amazon's iOS shopping app.

This past winter, Google introduced its own connected speaker, Google Home,

and embraced it with the same voice-controlled Google Assistant that was launched in Google's flagship Pixel phones. Google Home is playing catch-up, for sure, but is already quite good for people who use a lot of Google services, such as Google's music and movies service (Google Play), or are interested in Google's ChromeCast devices that function as a bridge to the Internet for TVs (Chromecast Ultra) and other speakers (Chromecast Audio). Sync your phone with Google's live phone

service, for instance, and you can make magic commands like "Okay, Google, show my Mission City photos on the TV." Google Home also leverages Google Search, making it more ambitious when answering questions—"Okay, Google, what are some good restaurants to try?" This can sometimes go horribly wrong with political questions, especially in our current age of fake news, but it's also quite fun in the middle of dinner to pose random questions ("Okay, Google, what's the longest river in the world?").

Apple's Siri, the original voice-activated digital assistant, doesn't have a stand-alone speaker to call its own, but it has been Google Home on the home front with an advanced, more secure platform for the connected home called HomeKit. Tapping around Apple's free Home app, it's quite easy to set up "scenes" with HomeKit-enabled accessories—lights turn upon door, thermostat adjusts, shades open or close—that are invoked with a simple "Hey, Siri, I'm home" or "Hey, Siri, movie night" spoken into an Apple Watch, Apple TV remote, iPad, or iPhone. As with Google Home, Siri is most useful if you're already a regular user of Apple services like Messages and iCloud. In addition to its own encyclopedic smarts—"Hey, Siri, who won the 1990 World Series?"—Siri can access your iPhone's address book to place calls, send text messages, and schedule calendar events, plus search photos on your phone or plug just about any song through Apple Music.

As you look for the most suitable digital assistant or overlapping combinations, our strong suggestion is to treat voice control as a series of reliable tools, no less than clicking the right buttons with a mouse or tapping a touch screen. Add hype an artificial intelligence that can make sense of your whims, but we're not there yet. Voice control works best when you embrace and build up a comfortable repertoire of defined commands. Lights out? "Hey, Siri, good night." ■



2) Google Home, \$129

Google's recent arrival to the Amazon Echo is better looking and less expensive, but so far still lags in skills, including many home-control features that are standard in Apple's Siri and the Amazon Echo. We recommend Google Home for users of Google's Chromecast and for streaming music. Expect more features for users of Google's calendar, a mail and Android services in Google adds more machine-learning features for personalized alerts. maddy.google.com/home/

3) Siri

Apple's voice-controlled assistant Siri has been built into iOS devices since 2011, with steady improvements that sometimes even line up to early Siri jobs performing a conversation with the iPhone. Current iOS devices are ideal for "Hey, Siri" commands even when sitting idle. Siri is great now for most directions and works with many apps to make no-brainer tasks easier (Open Table) for more daily or send money (Paycom) Connected with HomeKit, Apple's privacy-minded standard for connected appliances and devices, Siri gives you voice control of HomeKit-enabled appliances. apple.com/siri/siri/



4) Cortana

Microsoft has largely backed off of AI on phone efforts but offers its own Android and iOS apps to extend its digital assistant from its home on Windows 10 devices and the Xbox One gaming platform. The voice-controlled app is currently under development and includes features like calling reminders and search features and those tools for Office 365 users. Cortana is aimed for the AI character in Microsoft's video game series to personalize itself over time. microsoft.com/cortana



Reinventing a split-level

Front-facing gables, a mix of siding, and Craftsman-style details make an unremarkable home into a standout

BY KATE WOOD • ILLUSTRATION BY DRAGWITTE, INC.



SPLIT LEVELS gained ground in the 1930s due in part to a modern floor plan that offered easy circulation. But from the outside, their style was often lacking. "It's so manufactured and bland," *Alfred* Berger says of her 1999 split-level in North Creek, Michigan. "A Craftsman look would feel much warmer and more inviting." So we turned to Real Cedar's of Helena Seabrook Architects for ideas. His proposal was unmistakably Craftsman elements to transform the busy facade. Wide gables with deep eaves and brackets break up the main roofline. Shed-style metal accent roofs over the entry and the garage give the exterior even more dimension. To dispense the lower on-back portion of the house, Seabrook's plan adds stone veneer and chunky brackets. "I want my house to be vibrant and eye-catching," *Alfred* says, "and this is gorgeous!" ■

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finishing touches

Textured surface treatments and an earth-toned palette support a Craftsman-inspired makeover



garage doors
White carriage-style garage doors echo the house's main roofline. Shed-style metal accent roofs over the entry and the garage give the exterior even more dimension. To dispense the lower on-back portion of the house, Seabrook's plan adds stone veneer and chunky brackets. "I want my house to be vibrant and eye-catching," *Alfred* says, "and this is gorgeous!" ■



roofing
Architectural shingles are a rich, dark gray upgrade to the main roofline. GAF Timberline HD Shingles, about \$20 per roofing square, gaf.com



paint
Olive-green exterior paint brings depth to the main roofline. Craftsman look, Top (blue/gray) and Bottom (blue/gray) are the colors. White, from \$20 per gallon, color.com



stone veneer
Lightweight panels meet the brackets and the brackets. Superior Building Supplies' Four-Grain Heritage Stone, about \$10 per sq ft, herington.com

PHOTO: DRAGWITTE, INC.



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REAL CEDAR

Make a cedar planter

Tom Silva and Kevin O'Connor work together to build a beautiful, freestanding piece of furniture that will dress up any patio or deck

BY THOMAS BAKER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TRULLI

A LUSH WOOD planter brimming with vines and flowers offers a natural, welcome sight to outdoor spaces. Here's how you can make yours out of durable, fire-resistant western red cedar that will last a lifetime.

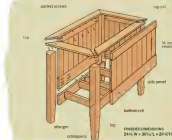
The Old Moore general contractor Tom Silva dragged it to look like a piece of furniture, with four tapered legs that allow the underside to lay out and the deck or patio underneath to be cleared. He also provided an air space between the wood and the soil by peering the potting mix in two milk crates lined with fabric grow bags. Water drains freely through the bags, the crates, and the planter's open bottom without soaking the sides.

For ease of construction, Tom attached the planter's sides, legs, and top with stainless steel pocket screws. These hidden fasteners sit inside low-angled holes bored with a special jig and bit. Once the holes are made, assembly is a snap.

To see how this freestanding piece is constructed, read on.



Ready for plants Tom Silva (right) affixes sturdy pocket screws and cedar planks. It's designed to hold a pot of flowers, house plants and ferns that keep the soil from leaching the wood.



TOOLS

- tape measure
- miter saw
- table saw
- disc sander
- router and router table
- 1 1/2-inch random-oriented MDF
- block plane
- pocket-hole jig
- bar clamps
- drill driver
- orbital sander

MATERIALS

- plastic milk crates Get two
- 12-by-36-inch plowlegs Get four
- 1/2-by-1/2-inch end-nails for rails, top, and stringers Get 32 feet
- 4-by-4 supports and posts for legs and crosspieces Get 13 feet
- 1-by-4s for rail and miter for side panels Get 16 feet
- at least six steel pocket screws
- 200-grit stainless steel deck sand
- 1 1/2-inch stainless steel wood screws
- wood glue
- 220- and 320-grit sandpaper
- penetrating oil finish for decks

STEP-BY-STEP Cedar planter



1) Prep the pieces. Using a miter saw, cut all the pieces to length, except the crosspiece for the base. Following the cut list (page 44), mount a 1/2-inch stacked disc blade on a table saw to shave to cut rabbets (grooves) in the planter's rails and stringers (attached) on the ends of side-panel pieces. Set the blade to make 1/2-inch-deep cuts



2) Cut the rabbets and rabbets. Position the fence to make a rabbet groove that attach rail that is offset 1/4-inch from the side's centerline. Cut the rabbet along the full length of a rail. For the rabbets, clamp a 1/2-pound block to the fence, as shown, and set the blade height to cut a 1/2-by-1/2-inch rabbet into both ends of each panel piece.



3) How they fit together. The rabbet on the end of each panel piece fits into the rabbets on the top and bottom rails, as shown. The offset rabbet makes finger-planting 1/2-inch-wide baseboard panel pieces and the rails on the planter's outside faces.

STEP-BY-STEP
CONTINUED
ON PAGE 44

STEP-BY-STEP

TIPS

How to make taper cuts

• **Cutting a taper** is best done on a table saw using a tapering jig, which angles the stock away from the fence. You can buy an adjustable tapering jig, or follow. Turn a lead and round out a custom jig out of scrap wood (see right).

• **To save this jig**, Turn both around at a leg against the jig's back, slide the leg under the 1x3, and hold the leg in place by driving a couple of screws horizontally through the 1x2.



4) Taper the legs. Replace the dado blade with a new blade. Rip the rails to width (see cut list), notching each 4-in.-down to 2 inches square. Next, set the table saw to cut a 2 7/8-degree taper on the outside facing sides of the lower legs. Mount a jig on the jig, and set the saw fence so the blade starts cutting the taper 8 inches from the leg's end, as shown. Rotate the leg a quarter turn, put it back in the jig, and cut the second taper. Repeat with the other three legs. Use sandpaper to smooth all the cut sides and ease the sharp edges.



9) Shape the legs. Check a 1-inch radius roundover into a router roundover to a router table. Turn on the router and feed each leg's unjoined edges and the spacing between the legs a entire length. Use a block plane to make a slight 'hump' in the leg's outside edges of the panel pieces.



6) Drill pocket holes. Using a pocket-hole jig and bit, drill evenly spaced holes through the inside faces (not the faces with the 1/4-inch reveal) at both ends of the rails, as shown. Next, drill pocket holes into the inside faces of the legs in the same 1/4-inch reveal. (See the pocket-hole placement in Step 1.)



7) Attach the top rails. Clamp a leg, rounded edge down, to the workbench. Place a top rail on 1/4-inch spacers with the pocket holes facing up. Lay up the rail's underside with the top of the leg and butt the rail end to the leg's end. Drive pocket screws into the leg, as shown.

TIPS

How to use a pocket-hole jig

• **Set the depth.** Adjust the jig and the stop collar on the bit to match the thickness of the stock. Both settings are shown on the jig.

• **Mark the grain direction.** Make sure that the wood grain of the piece receiving the screws runs perpendicular to the screws. Screws driven into end grain won't hold.

• **Adjust the drill clutch.** Set the drill clutch so that the pocket screws are all tight to the last turn of the pocket without stripping the hole.

• **Double-check the screw length.** The screw tip should not exit the wood.



8) Attach the bottom rail.

Rest the rail pocket holes up on 1/4-inch spacers and insert the ends of a panel piece snugly into the dados of both rails. Push all three pieces against the leg; then slide the bottom rail away from the top one by 1/4 inch, as shown. Then secure the rails to each other with pocket screws that bottom rail to the leg.



9) Assemble one side. Slide the remaining panel pieces into the rails, leaving the 1/4-inch reveal on the outside. Clamp another leg to the workbench as in Step 7. Repeat the rail on 1/4-inch spacers to the top rail to flush with the leg's top, leaving a 1/4-inch gap between the rails and panel pieces. Pocket-screw both rails to fluting.



10) Assemble the box. Repeat Steps 7, 8, and 9 to make two more sides. Attach the rails to the legs, as shown. Follow a different order when marking the last side: Secure the top rail to both legs; fit the panel pieces into the top rail's dado; then slip the bottom rail over the panel pieces' ends. Finish off each side by the legs, leaving a 1/4-inch gap.



11) Fit the top. After the 1x3 stock is to the length specified on the cut list, drill pocket holes in the ends of fluting pieces. Then glue the miter joint and clamp it so the jaws straddle the joint. Then will keep the fluting flush as you drive the pocket screws through the miter. Rip up a scrap piece with a hand saw. Now mark the 1/4-inch overhang on each corner of the top, and place the box upside down on those marks. Pocket-screw the top to the box as shown. The top will fit the box frame as a unit, allowing the box and preventing it from rocking.

STEP-BY-STEP



12] Sand the top. When the glue dries, in about an hour, fill an orbital sander with 220-grit sandpaper and smooth the top as shown. Abruse the sander to ease the top's edges and corners, and remove any glue residue in the joints. Follow up with 320-grit to eliminate scratches.



13] Construct the base. Cut four vertical crosspieces from the 4x4 rip cuts and two diagonal brags from the decked 1x6 stock. Square the crosspieces to support the crate. Position one side of each crosspiece flush with each stringer's underside side, and fasten the pieces with a ladder. Use frame with 2x4-inch deck screws, as shown.



14] Join all the base. Slide the base, divided ends down, between the bottom rails, as shown. Set the lower edge of the stringers 3 inches above the lower edge of the bottom rails, then fasten the stringers to these rails with 1x4-inch wood screws.



15] Fit the plastic liner. Put the greenings into the milk crates and set the crate inside the planter's holes, as shown. Place the plastic in its final location and fill with soil and plants. To protect the wood from the sun and weather, apply a preservative along all finish coats for decks. ■

SEE IT BUILT
Watch Tom and Karen assemble this planter in [Brwnhlsnw.com/video-planter](http://brwnhlsnw.com/video-planter)

CUT LIST

TOP
4x4 (painted long point)
2 at 38 1/2 inches
2 at 24 1/4 inches

BASE
4x4 (rip cut)
4 at 24 inches
4 at 38 1/2 inches

TOP RAILS
4x4 (rip cut)
2 1/2 inches wide
2 at 37 1/2 inches
2 at 33 inches

BOTTOM RAILS
4x4 (rip cut)
5 inches wide
2 at 37 1/2 inches
2 at 33 inches

STRINGERS
4x4
2 at 33 inches

CROSSPIECES
2x4 (rip cut)
2 at 37 1/2 inches
4 at 33 inches

PANEL PIECES
1x6
20 at 33 inches

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2 Split the granite

A) Set the holes. Determine the location of the fire pit—usually centered in the patio and parallel to the rear deck. Use the patio to mark the outside perimeter of the finished fire pit on the compacted base. Stretch a mason line across the patio base tied off to stakes beyond the perimeter lines, then square it to a perimeter string. This represents the outside face of one of the fire pit walls, and you'll use it later to square the pavers. To split the granite to length (joints are 12 to 16 inches), start by drawing a cut line with a wax pencil along three sides of the stone. Chisel a 1/4-inch masonry bit into an auger hammer, then put on safety eye and lung protection. Drill a series of holes 3 inches deep and about 3 to 4 inches apart along the cut line. Spray the bit with water to keep down the dust.

B) Add spacers. Set a pair of curved steel fasteners and a wedge into each opening. Fit the wedge between the fasteners which should curve out and away from each other. Tap each wedge lightly with a 3-pound deadblow mallet to snug it.

C) Strike the steel. Using the sledgehammer and working sequentially, hit each wedge a little at a time until the rock splits along the cut line.

D) Remove the new face. Once the rock cracks, pull the fasteners and wedges out and pry away the waste, exposing the new split face.

TIP To save time, ask if the stone yard can cut the granite blocks to size and set them in place on the base.



3 Build the fire pit

A) Set the first stone. Use a mini excavator fitted with a litter attachment to guide the first section of granite into place, or have a backhoe contractor do it for you. As the operator lowers the stone, use a digging bar to guide it into alignment along the patio markings made earlier. Tell the stone in place and it will be level, as shown. If the granite is not at level, lift the stone, and shovel some gravel base to those spots underneath and reset the stone.

B) Finish the fire pit. Set the second piece of granite as close as you can to the first one, making a center. Check it to be level, then repeat the process for the remaining granite pieces.

4 Set the patio height

A) Add drainage. Dump a 2- to 3-inch deep layer of 1/4-inch crushed stone into the pit and level it. This stone will help the fire pit to drain after a rain.

B) Set bluestone height. Snap a mason line across one side of the fire pit 2 inches above the compacted base as shown. This line represents the finished height of the bluestone once the pavers are laid in place.

C) Compact stone dust. Add a 2- to 3-inch thick layer of stone dust over the base and tamp it to about a 1/2-inch.

TIP Design the patio pattern on 1/4-inch graph paper. Draw the perimeter first, then add pavers to scale, repositioning as necessary for a random look. Try to keep joints less than 3 feet long.



5 Lay the bluestone

A) Set the first stone. Work out the patio pattern on paper first. Then lay a 24-inch long piece of bluestone about 1/2 inch away from the edge of the granite wall, extending past the fire pit corner by about 20 inches, leaving enough room for the second paver and the joint. Make sure the paver is evenly spaced away from the mason line by the fire pit. Check the bluestone for level, according to the 1/4-inch grid, using a rubber mallet to set the stone. Check that it's level, then set it with a mallet.

B) Turn the corner. Place an 18- by 18-inch paver next to the first one, leaving about a 1/4-inch wide joint between the stones. Check that it's level, then set it with a mallet.

C) Finish the pattern. Continue building out the bluestone pattern, mixing 24- and 12-inch wide covers together while keeping the outside edges of the patio straight. Stagger the joints between neighboring pavers.

D) Fill the joints. Spread stone dust over the finished patio and push it into the joints with a broom. Repeat until the joints are full, then add the patio down with a water bucket to the joints. Add topsoil around the edges of the patio to cover any exposed base material.



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TITAN

ask This Old House

Q One of my copper gutters can't handle the volume of water running into it. Would adding another downspout stop the gutter from overflowing?

—FRANKENWALD, GORHAM, ME

A Another downspout would double your gutter's capacity, but that means you'll have to remove the gutter and reinstall it so its high point is halfway between the two downspouts. Try these simpler fixes first: Check your downspout for clogs, and correct any sag along the gutter's run. If that doesn't work, a bigger downspout in place of the existing one could help. Remember, when adding or replacing a downspout, be sure it's made of copper, like the ones on this page.

—THE EDITOR



47

tips, tricks, and
answers to
your home-
improvement
questions

PHOTOGRAPH BY BURCAVSKIE

askthisoldhouse.com 57

Our cast of veteran experts



TOM SILVA
General Contractor



HOBBS & RAINE
Master Carpenter



RICHARD TRETHOWEY
Plumbing and Heating Expert



ROGER COOK
Landscape Contractor



KEVIN CONRATH
Host

I want to plant a raised-bed garden in an area now covered with 4 inches of gravel. Do I have to dig it out? How deep should the soil be? Can I use pressure-treated lumber?

—RENE BRANCH, JACKSON, MS



ROGER COOK REPLIES: The depth of the raised bed depends on what you want to grow in it. Shallow-rooted herbs and vegetables need only 3- to 6 inches of soil. Given the chance, peas, peppers, and beans will send roots down 36 inches or more. But as not everything else should be grown in soil at least a foot deep. So dig your intent.

Clear the gravel to out of the way—more so to make an easy-to-work walkway around your new bed—than over the soil underneath because it's probably very compacted. Go as deep as you can and lighten it with a mix of compost and sand.

Like to make the sides of these beds out of 2x4 timbers, 16 feet longer and doesn't hold as much as 1x6 boards. Cedar, another common red or brown wood, is good because it's so not resistant, but I've also used pressure-treated lumber. Then stain the glue for pressure-treated wood because it leaches metals into the soil.

The best soil mix for a raised bed consists of our part garden soil, one

Roger Cook built this raised-bed vegetable garden using 2x4s up one board held in place with six corner stakes. He cut the stakes that fasten to the center of the bed would be easy to reach.

part sand, and two parts compost. It will allow water to drain and keep your raised bed from becoming a pond after a heavy rain. Leave the soil a couple of inches below the bed's edges to keep it contained.

Light fixture in a radiant ceiling?
How do I safely install a light fixture over my dining room table without cutting the heating wires in my radiant ceiling?

—LUCY KALLER, ROBERTSON, ON

SCOTT GARRON REPLIES: It's a good thing that you know your ceiling has hidden wires snaggling through it. Hardwired ceilings were in vogue in the 1960s and '70s, and most DIYers wouldn't think to check for wires before drilling.

A few years ago, your guess on would have stumped me. But these days, I can actually see where hot wires are thanks to my handheld thermal imaging device. It converts invisible infrared energy into colors on a display screen that surfaces show up in bright orange; cool surfaces in dark purple. These devices retail for about \$200, or you can rent one at a home center.

For best mobility, turn off the on/off heat, and move for a good night to crank it up to high. Then mark the locations of the wires.

Scott Garron is a licensed master electrician and owner of Carron Electric in Lexington, MA. He appears regularly on TV episodes of Ask This Old House.



What Is It?

Hand saw

Gate

Drawer slide

JIG

Ladder leveler

Wheelbarrow ramp

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glowing on the device's screen. If you're lucky, you'll find a clean, wire-free spot on the ceiling that's at least 4 inches in diameter. Why 4 inches? The smallest or long box for hanging a fixture is 36 inches across.

Get the rust out
Our well water has iron in it, which affects its taste and causes staining. A local water treatment company says that a standard water softener can remove the iron, but I don't want to drink soft water or have its salty backlash pumped into my yard. Can you suggest another way to get rid of the iron?

—FITZGERALD, MAINTON, WINCHESTER, VA

RICHARD TRETHOWEY REPLIES: Several options are available for removing iron, but the treatment varies depending on the kind of iron you have, along with other factors. If you haven't already done so, get a water test to determine the type and amount of iron, in parts per million (ppm), as well as the water's pH and dissolved oxygen content.

The three most common types of iron in well water are iron bacteria, which show up as reddish

clumps in toilet tanks, laundry area, also known as red iron, which turns water a cloudy orange, and ferrous iron, also known as clear water iron. Ferrous iron doesn't affect water clarity, but it stains ceramics and clothing and has a rinky-dink taste. Dollars no doubt, that's the type you have.

I know you're against using a water softener, but it can be an effective and economical way to remove iron levels—3 ppm or less—if the water's pH isn't too high. A softener can remove iron under less-than-ideal conditions, but then its resin beads may fail and need to be replaced, as often as every two to three years.

When a softener doesn't work, there are many special-shaped iron filters that will. They all operate on the same principle: to oxidize the dissolved ferrous iron and convert it into ferric iron particles that can then be captured by running the water through a bed of manganese sand filters upon oxidizers such as air, chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, or ozone into the water ahead of the iron filter bed. Others use manganese-rich media such as Greensand Plus or Birm to oxidize and capture the iron in one step. And some combine



Well water and iron (right) means that almost clear water can be turbid, yet still affects taste and stains clothes and clothing.

What is it?

Drawer slide jig

This jig simplifies the mounting of drawer slides on cabinets, ensuring that each slide is square to the cabinet front and level with the opposite slide. Works with both frameless and face-frame cabinets. \$25 per pair; longtool.com

injection with oxidizing media. "It's more effective, more environmentally friendly than being periodically washed with another potent oxidizer, potassium persulfate."

All these filters work best with water in the 5 to 8 pH range. And they all have to be flushed—backwashed—regularly to remove the buildup of iron particles. The process uses a lot of water, about 10 gallons per meter per square foot of mineral media. If the system is calibrated properly, the iron is ch-

lorated in safe for municipal sewers and septic systems.

"When comparing iron filters, make sure you know how many gallons of backwash they're likely to use, the required flow rate during a backwash, and the cost of any chemicals that have to be added."

Fix for cracked concrete steps
I've tried many tars to fill the cracks between my painted

concrete steps and the stuccoed half wall outside my front entry. But the repairs always fail within a few years. Is there a way to fix this once and for all?

—DAVE RANCO, MARISA, IL

SEVIN O'CONNOR REPLIES

I showed pictures of your cracked steps to masonry contractor Mark McCauleigh, owner of MJM Masonry, who worked on the recent TOH Arts & Crafts TV project home in Arlington, Massachusetts. Here's what he had to say:

"Generally, walk like the ones flanking your steps are built on solid foundations, while the concrete steps are just poured on the ground between them. These walks won't move, but clearly the steps have

settled to the right. I suspect they've stopped settling by now, so a hard, permanent repair is should work."

"Use a malleable gap filler, like this, I'd use Quikrete Fast-Set Repair Mortar (quikrete.com). It's stiff enough you won't sag out of the gaps before it sets, and it has added polymers that act as bonding agents to the existing concrete."

"Then, dress the area with a wire

brush and compressed air, then dampen it with water. Apply painter's tape to the steps where you don't want the mortar to crack and rub the walls to act as a bond breaker, you don't want the mortar adhering to the wall. Set the water into the mortar, following the instructions on the bag, and apply the mix with a margin trowel, pushing it into each corner so you can step inside the cracks. Then go back and fill them flush. You have about 15 minutes of working time. After that initial set, smooth and sculpt the repair with a brick trowel. Remove the tape and cover the patch with plastic for 24 hours to ensure that the concrete cures properly. It can be painted after three days."

"While you're at it, patch the stucco where it meets the steps

Quikrete's Fast-Set Stucco Patch is a good choice. Apply fresh strips of tape to the cracks and corners, dampen the area to be patched, and trowel on the mix. Use a sponge to match the texture. Remove the tape and wait 28 days before painting the patch and the rest of the wall."

When concrete steps stop sinking, cracks like the ones at right can be repaired with a fast-setting repair mortar.



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Norm's tricks of the trade

I need to fill an uneven gap between the end of a bathroom vanity and an out-of-plumb wall. How should I go about it?

—BARBARA SAGIS, DARLAND, CA

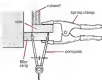
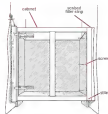
A For a tight custom fit between any cabinet and wall, make a filler strip scribed to follow the wall's contours. You'll need little more than a square, a compass, a level, and a strip of 1/2-inch wider than the widest cabinet-to-wall gap.

1) Position the strip. Place the 1/2-inch wide strip against the wall so that one edge touches the wall. Adjust to a level to make sure the strip is plumb. Hold the strip in place with two spring clamps, as shown.

2) Set the compass. Adjust its legs to equal the distance between the outer edge of the cabinet stile and the edge of the filler strip opposite the wall, as shown.

3) Scribe. Without changing the compass setting, guide the leg with the metal point along the wall as the other leg, the one with the pencil lead, makes a scribe line on the strip. Keep the legs level as you scribe.

4) Cut and attach. Follow the scribe line with a jigsaw angled to cut a 5-degree bevel. Fit the strip out with a block plane. Attach the strip's unscribed edge to the cabinet by driving counter-sunk screws through the stile into the strip. ■



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JUNE

Much as we appreciate the wonders of climate control, there's no better feeling than opening the door and letting the breeze fly by. Welcome back, summer. We've missed you.

PHOTO © T. KELLY

Bright Ideas

A lively yet restrained paint palette turns a century-old white box into a cheerful family home

By **Deborah Baldwin**

Photographs by **Ken Gutmaker**

Produced by **Tisha Leung**

Styling by **Rachel Cleveland Riedy**

Don't take Selma Blumenthal all too seriously when she tells you she almost passed up her Sonoma, California, farmhouse while seeking in on a different home nearby. "I didn't anticipate I would fall in love with it," she says of the one whose door she was home with. "It was pretty worn down." But Selma knows a find when she sees it. A compulsive organizer with a terrific eye and considerable resources, she was able to take one look at the frame-in-time well-preserved, historic home, long-caring, and looking razor-sharp and see a stylish, light-filled family house, an enter scheme as smart and savvy as its renowned 4.6-acre lot.

The four-bedroom, three-bath house had been painted in a understated palette. But inside, it boasted plaster walls, white oak floors, nine-foot ceilings, and 3,200 square feet. It also offered Selma, an ex-Sonoma, a piece of her adopted town's history. While Sonoma is famous these days for its touring, rooms and \$400-a-night beds, not all that long ago it was



ABOVE: A smart new paint palette enhances the facade of the 1907 house. Homeowner Selma Blumenthal, who lives there, says it's a find. (right) One of the best of the house's original features: the kitchen. (left) The house's original features: the kitchen. (right) The house's original features: the kitchen.

OPPOSITE: Blumenthal's style colors in with colors like country. (left) The house's original features: the kitchen. (right) The house's original features: the kitchen.





of a two-gable wrap-around porch, looking as neatly composed and serene as the living room train.

Property improvements didn't stop there, though maybe it's best not to get into the drive of sheep that now keeps the grass under control or the barn as the stable or the freestanding exercise studio. Just using what a little paint and attention to detail did inside the house money couldn't enough.

"The woodwork is nice," Selma says. "The doors are all solid wood with five panels and glass knobs. The baseboards are a consistent eight inches or so. And we used a bright white throughout with two main colors, blue and yellow."

The halfway for the rest of us? Before putting your money down, set up the character of a house and the quality of the materials that went into it. And when you're ready to remodel, go ahead and envision people whom you trust—Selma invited interior designer Kim Browning and John Barnes, who runs the local paint store, to lead the way—but "don't design for someone else," she admonishes. "Find out what your style is in terms of colors and furnishings, to you can express that."

Selma credits two influences for her success as an old-house revival: her handy guests, who grew up during the Depression and taught her the importance of a neat egg, and a then-avant-garde 1987 book, *Maintaining The Smart Woman's Guide to*



DESIGNER: The master bedroom entered a former sleeping porch. The vaulted ceiling, painted to evoke the past, is new. Ceiling light fixture. Shades. Orange windows. Pale.

ABOVE LEFT: A whimsical carpenter's the attic alters into a living for a newly finished space.

ABOVE RIGHT: A new sun. The owner holds a gathering spot for the kids and their friends.

BEYOND AND REMODELING Real Estate for Profit. by Susan Lee Bringham. (Small-world footnotes: After acquiring some 70 houses, Bringham is now a comic, actress, hostess, and restaurateur—in Sonoma—and her restaurant is in the former home of Boulder Valley's daughter.)

When the couple got married, Selma says, "I would buy a house and fix it up with the intention of holding on to it and bringing back others. The more I did it, the more I was intrigued." But whether salvaging a house for profit or for oneself, there's a true payoff, she adds. "It ends up being equal parts honoring the past and breathing new life into a house you love."

That goes double for a house with period detail and popcorn ceilings—and maybe the occasional window seat. "When people come in, they respond because it's traditional and expected," she says of her forever house. "They feel such a great calm."



small wonder

A homeowner with a magpie's eye and a restless imagination turns his own little slice of Buffalo, New York, into a magical garden brimming with ideas

BY JEANNE HUBER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROS CARDILLO

When flower-filled English country front gardens, brick paths, arched windows, and flower boxes dripping with vines, this Buffalo, New York, home has enough storybook charm to fill a children's book. But a glimpse of the lightning-bolt floral crown crowning the house alerts us the first clue that its garden scene is less Peter Rabbit, more Harry Potter meets Alice in Wonderland.

Constructed from a local sculptor, the lightning bolt looks a lot like the scar on Harry's forehead. Walk into the garden, and you'll see the address posted on the garden shed is 2134—the house number plus a reference to

OPPOSITE The character of the 1890s house is enhanced by riotous perennial beds cut front with a matching shed. This yard was just a few months from its first look when the owners moved in 10 years ago. **TOP PHOTO LEFT** The lightning bolt sits atop a brick-shaped soapstone made into a fountain. **AT TOP RIGHT** Star light, star bright, star through a window.



Platform 9 3/4, where Harry takes the train to his wizarding world. A doozy planting strip features odd-looking specimens such as sensitive plant (*Mimosa pudica*), which has leaves that curl up when touched, and below a sign proclaiming the botanical oddities as THE HARRY POTTER GARDEN. And, evoking the playing-card characters in Alice's Wonderland, diamond-shaped and every where—in paving, latticework, nozzles, even the potting shed windows and shutters.

But in the real world, gardens like this one don't just happen with the wave of a wand as a subtle or a masterpiece. They take time and toil, as well as someone with an eye for design and unfading creativity—someone like Jim Charter. The graphic designer loves to spend drizzle-water weekends sketching and dreaming new features for the garden, then heads outside to make them happen as soon as the weather warms. His wife, Leslie, keeps it all looking fresh, constantly weeding and deadheading.

"We like to poke that Jim is the gardener, and I am the groundskeeper," she says good-naturally.

At their previous home, the pair had opened

ADVICE: Hugging the driveway on one side and a fence or house on the other, the new potting shed adds privacy from the street and a charming focal point. Just beyond it, a bench delivers one edge of a courtyard paved with marble and granite to look like a courtyard. Along the side, a bench delivers one edge of a courtyard paved with marble and granite to look like a courtyard. Along the side, a bench delivers one edge of a courtyard paved with marble and granite to look like a courtyard.

right! Leslie and Jim Charter by the shed door



their yard to visitors during Garden Walk Suffolk, an event that now draws an estimated 65,000 people each summer. Jim, who stayed in town after attending college there, went on the road the year it began, in 1993. "Half the yards I went into, I thought, 'My garden is better than this,'" he recalls. "So the next year, we put our garden on the tour." Then the organizing committee asked him to design a poster and a map, and he got hooked, eventually serving as the organization's chairman for seven years. "People here are just so friendly—freely friendly," he says, clearly pleased. When the Charters moved into this house, 16 years ago, they were eager to get it on the tour too. Only problem, Leslie says, was that "the yard was just a tree, some grass, and a few shrubs."

That first summer, Jim ripped out part of the front lawn and planted perennials. "Having grown up with a suburban yard, where every nook, wherever we were mowing or raking, I just wanted to get rid of the grass," he says, as though he likes to list about. Another early project, introduced to grass,

NOTE: A trip checker board of concrete pavers arranged in a grid leads to the kitchen garden. Elevated beds are built with recycled bricks and stones, with lower-high than 18" supports from a regular house. In front of the house, the garden is a fully built, even as plants expand with landscaping the season progresses.

the plan

A concrete driveway leading to a garage at the back of the 50-by-135-foot property divides the summer lot early in half. But rather than undercutting the airiness of the garden, the paved strip serves as an inviting, spacious path for visitors. A deck tucked between the house and the garage provides an outdoor dining area on the right. On the left are the garden shed, a cedar-boarded solution to the kitchen garden, and a sitting area.





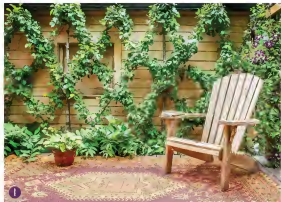
that had square openings. "I was playing around and thought, 'Oh, I should angle it into diamonds.' It went from there. The next time I had to make a decision, 'Oh, a diamond, that's my!'"

The Charles' most challenging project, by far, was the potting shed, which made its debut last summer, replacing a broken play structure they inherited with the house. Three years ago, Leslie asked Jim what they should do with the space, and they settled on a small building to house the wheelbarrows, potting soil, overwintering plants, and other garden necessities that were taking over their garage.

They wanted the shed to match the style of the house, and it had to be small enough to fit on one side of the driveway. The plan they settled on called for an 8 by 12 foot unit, well under the 144-square feet that triggers the need for a building permit in Berkeley. Jim's graphic design skills come in handy as he sketches various designs. He is created the drawing they liked best on his computer. Using Adobe Illustrator, he worked out proportions and calculated amounts. Then he was ready to cut

ABOVE: Potted plants array all within arm's reach in the potting shed, which the house sits on the deck. The shed is the house's garden shed. The house is the house's garden shed.

RIGHT: A metalwork lattice—on a wooden frame—houses a brick and stone vine. (The house is the house's garden shed.)



wood and poured concrete, and built it all on his own, with occasional ladder-building help from Leslie and Margaret, now 19.

Low-cost suppliers, they incorporated cut-offs, often from their house. Besides using the original diamond-paned windows, Jim built in show boxes from old lowered closet doors, and repurposed a shelving unit and a glass-panel screen door that were stockpiled in the garage when they moved in.

Jim painted the outside of the shed to match the house, yellow-green on the body (painted by the previous owners), plus the purple and dark green that the Charles added. The shed got two additional colors—blue-green and white—when Jim says creates a "Miami-Gate look" that he likes.

Inside, Jim lined the shed with salvaged fence pickets nailed up with all the debris cut off from that were left over from projects around the house. He nailed them up horizontally as canvas paneling, creating a sturdy grid of colors that's perfect for a building that the family now refers to as the Happy Potting Shed.

ABOVE: The diamond-paned window, once repurposed from a broken window, is the house's garden shed. The house is the house's garden shed. The house is the house's garden shed.

WANT MORE? Get additional photos of this space and more at www.farmhouse.com/farmhouse

Last winter, Jim was back in his basement workshop, designing and building the next new feature for this summer's garden work, which takes place on July 29 and 30. He rigged a rain chain and ornate cutout into a fountain, his fourth, others feature a fish-shaped sculpture (a kind of water spout), a collection of hand-thrown ceramic pieces threaded onto a pipe, and an assembly of copper rods flaring and copper tubing that Jim cut and shaped into beehives (over and over)—a design inspired by a fountain in the garden seen at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London. Having another fountain will be great, Jim says. "One splash, one trickle, one hug. This will sound more like falling water."

To a visitor's eye, the garden looks complete, though it's probably at the 75 percent level," Jim says. Jim's still dreaming about a few more features. And the kitchen garden is due for reworking, the adds, because the area is now shady for most vegetables. "Every now and then a new project, I think, 'Oh, no, now what?'" Leslie says. "But we'll eventually run out of space!" ■

before + after

Fresh Start

Relocating the kitchen allows a family to create a big, bright, open space that connects to the deck—with its grilling island—and serves as the hub of the house

BY NINA WALKER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN GUTMAKER
PRODUCED BY TISHA LEUNG | STYLING BY SARAH ALRA

Goldilocks may be a fairy tale character, but the quest for “just right” inspires many a real-life remodel. Shortly after moving into their 1941 house in San Carlos, California, Mike Huss and Lisa Porter realized the kitchen just wouldn’t do for their crew: It was too small, too dim, and too bare-bones for Mike’s considerable cooking skills. “We wanted a central open gathering place with casual eating areas, lots of storage, and quality appliances,” Mike says. “All materials would have to stand up to kids, dogs, and assorted mischief.” As part of a whole-house renovation that included a second-story addition, architect Steve Swearingen appropriated two bedrooms in the back of the house for the new kitchen, which now opens onto a deck with a fully loaded grill island. The kitchen’s bold pattern of gray, yellow, and blue is tempered by white and off-white painted cabinetry, mosaic countertops, and wood floors. Now the family can host a sit-down ambitious dinner party or crowd-pleasing barbecue to sleepover hosts (last passed over by the kids, Chasey, 13, and Eli, 12). “We love the freedom and flexibility it offers,” Mike says. “It’s perfect for us.”

BEFORE Measuring 154 square feet, the former kitchen was dark, had minimal storage, and came with basic appliances

AFTER Any light—and even that a little less—of its predecessor—the new kitchen boasts a super-stylish range and a custom island to central



BEFORE

before + after

Neat and tidy

Commonly cluttered near-bedroom mudroom and the dining room, the mother-daughter quindley duty in a drop zone charging station, wet bar and coffee counter. "It's great to make coffee without getting in the way of other family activities," Mike says. *Wendy Hodge, San Jose*



For Mike Hodge, Lisa Porter, and their children, Cameron and Eli, the renovated kitchen enables plenty of family fun and socializing with friends.

Decked out

The grill on the corner became the kitchen for safety and convenience. It could be an island with a drop tank and storage. Overhead lights and heaters extend its use into the evening year-round. Stepping down to dining area separates it from any meal prep mess. *Dan Fisher & Popski*



A pergola defines the outdoor cooking area. It lets the sun and boats back lighting.

PLANNING A KITCHEN REMODEL? Find out if you qualify for a grant at thisoldhouse.com/futurereno



Smart storage

The island holds knives for cookbooks and cabinets for cleaning supplies as well as a trash and recycling bin. It's the family spot for socializing, snacking and food prep. Vented soapstone sink for durable, heat-resistant work surface. Stone countertop and

Light dining

With two walls of new windows, the dining area is airy and bright. A U-shaped bench with a table with live edge reclaimed wood top gives it a stylish look. Two mock comfortably seats seven. *Windows, Miami*



before

Two small bedrooms were gutted for the kitchen (and replaced in the new second story).



after

Relocated and rebuilt, the kitchen now opens onto a grilling deck and gets great light.

1. Gutted most of the interior walls, then ran new plumbing and electrical for the new sinks and refrigerator.

2. Centered a 5-by-10-foot island in the work zone, added a sink, dishwasher, storage and seating.



3. Put in a door to access the new deck and outdoor kitchen.

4. Built a U-shaped bench to define the dining area and a table with live edge reclaimed wood top.

5. Left a wide opening to the hallway, which leads to the office and a first-floor master suite.

6. Fit a wet bar into the space below the new staircase, made a wider opening to the dining room with no door.

READ
THIS
BEFORE
YOU

REDO YOUR ROOF

Four out of five homeowners opt for asphalt shingles—here's the lowdown on choosing the right ones for your own roof BY SAI VASUDEVA

From keeping your house weather-tight to capping its curb appeal, there's a lot riding on your roof. It has to withstand decades of blazing sun, pounding rain, gusting winds, and so many other, often less obvious, stresses that it protects you from the elements—all while looking good from the street.

When it comes to maintaining your home, a new roof is one of the biggest tasks you have to make. While that can be intimidating, experts agree that getting the job done right boils down to a two-part process. First, explore colors and styles by driving around your neighborhood to see how homes similar to yours look with different shingle colors and shapes. Most manufacturers have options in all the basic color families: browns and reds, blues and greens, grays and blacks, and golds and tans. Then, as with any remodeling job, work with a top-notch contractor. The major shingle manufacturers' websites list approved installers by ZIP code, often highlighting those who've passed best-practice training. The quality of the work is key. Asphalt shingles are pretty resilient, but these days, as failures can usually be traced back to poor installation.

Up ahead, what you need to know about choosing and installing an asphalt roof that will protect and enhance your home for years to come.

For a color pick, take note the pick a roof that incorporates a shade or two of the house. Like the darker charcoal tones in the architectural shingles here, which tie into the house's trim. Similar to storm Timberline HD shingles in Dayton, Ohio, about \$10 per roofing square (gaf.com)



Overlays vs. tear off

They use the same shingles, but these two installation methods are very different

OVERLAY: PUTTING ON A SECOND LAYER

Most building codes allow for two layers of asphalt shingles on a house, so stripping off everything down to the plywood sheathing may not be your only choice. Putting new shingles over existing ones is less expensive and faster, requiring less labor (but it also means you lose the chance to check the shuffling harbors of water damage). If your roof runs good shape but has some damage to one side from a downed tree or lost last shingles in a wind storm, an overlay is worth considering.

TEAR OFF: STRIPPING AWAY THE OLD ROOF

More expensive because of the additional labor and materials, peeling off the old roof down to the sheathing is generally better if you already have two layers. The Old House general contractor Tom Silva pro tips this route is even when the roof is just a single layer so he can find the source of any water damage, replace the flashing, and install shingles to stay for longer.

WHAT IT COSTS

A new 3,500-square-foot roof can range from \$5,500 to more than \$20,000. Here's what goes into a contractor's quote.

MATERIALS | 30% Tear-offs require three wooden joist and underlayment and starter strips. In an overlay, the shingles are the main material, and they account for more of the total cost, about 60%.

LABOR | 35% Stripping off a roof is labor-intensive, and complicated roofs can increase the cost by up to 25%. An overlay often is a one-day job, reducing labor costs to about 15% of the budget.

DISPOSAL | 15% Your contractor's cost for renting a Dumpster.

JOB SITE EXTRAS | 5% This can include fees for training, bundles of shingles up to the roof and renting scaffolding or portable toilets.

Select a grade

Spending more usually means a broader selection of colors and shapes to choose from. Most companies offer the full range.

GOOD: Three-tab shingles

Nearly all shingles start as a fiberglass mat soaked with water-resistant asphalt. The top coat is a layer of glass or rock granules, wrapped in a ceramic pigment coating that protects the asphalt from UV rays. Made in one consistent thickness, these shingles are usually 12 by 36 inches with three to five tabs, or segments—all with the same nailing pattern.



PROS: Price—these are always the least expensive option. Available in most residential-style blacks, grays, and browns. A clean uniform look.

CONS: The single flat layer offers less dimension with no shadow lines. While most include two colors, they have less color depth than more expensive shingles.

PRICE: \$51 to \$64 per roofing square*

BETTER/BEST: Laminated shingles

Instead of one layer, laminated, or architectural, shingles have two or more layers with three-dimensional tabs of varying sizes. The shingles are usually the same size as the basic three-tab but a laminated shingle can weigh up to 50 percent more, which may increase durability and come with a long or warranty.



PROS: The thicker tabs vary in size and shape for more dimension and deeper shadow lines, suggestion of wood or stone. Laminated shingles offer the greatest range of colored granules.

CONS: More expensive than three-tab shingles.

PRICE: \$60 to over \$280 per roofing square for special shapes.

*Shingles are priced per roofing square, which is equal to 100 square feet.

BEYOND-THE-BASIC SHAPES

Whether mimicking thick wood shakes or courses of colored slate, designer laminated shingles aren't limited to rectangles.



SHAKES: Meant to suggest the look of cedar shake roofs, these shingles have clipped corners on those two-ply, not just asphalt, shingles. Weather in Arizona, Brown about \$200 per square, making roofing easy.



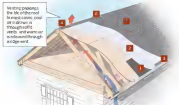
SLATE-LIKE: On a steeply pitched roof, the clipped corners on these two-ply, not just asphalt, shingles evoke the shape and texture of American Victorian-style Shingles. Carrington House in Georgetown, Ark. about \$325 per square, contained care.



DIAMONDS: This shingle, in soft shades of grey, recalls French mansions commonly found in 19th-century mansions. Similar to shingles, Carrington House in Georgetown, Ark. about \$147 per square, gaff.com.

ALL UNDER ONE ROOF

While the shingles are all you see, a hard-wearing roof is considered a system with many parts that work together to keep your house dry and comfortable. The focus isn't just on keeping the water out but also on preventing moisture in the air from building up and causing mold and rot. This is how your contractor will build your roof backup after laying it down to the 16, 24, 48, 96, 192, 384, or 768 inch.



1 ICE AND WATER SHEET

A self-adhesive membrane applied along eaves and in the valleys, it's a barrier to water and ice. It should extend 3 feet beyond the edge of the roof and cover any valleys, gutters, and downspouts.

2 UNDERLAYMENT

A self-adhesive membrane applied along eaves and in the valleys, it's a barrier to water and ice. It should extend 3 feet beyond the edge of the roof and cover any valleys, gutters, and downspouts.

3 STARTER SHINGLES

A narrow row of asphalt shingles, the starter strip is nailed to the perimeter of the roof with a nail of the same size as the shingles.

4 BRIDGE VENT

Openings along the ridge are covered with a long strip of asphalt shingles, the ridge cap, which is nailed to the rafters.

5 SHINGLES

Applied from the eaves up toward the ridge, shingles are nailed to the rafters.

keeping an interior finisher, also use the same technique to install the ceiling. Working in small sections, use a trowel to apply the plaster, smoothing it with a float. The ceiling should be finished before the walls are started.

6 BRIDGE CAPS

Perforated in the center, bridge caps are nailed to the rafters, providing ventilation for the roof.

7 BRIDGE CAPS

Perforated in the center, bridge caps are nailed to the rafters, providing ventilation for the roof.

8 BRIDGE CAPS

Perforated in the center, bridge caps are nailed to the rafters, providing ventilation for the roof.

9 BRIDGE CAPS

Perforated in the center, bridge caps are nailed to the rafters, providing ventilation for the roof.



CONTRACTOR COURTESY

A crew sweeps in to prep off your roof and put it back together. Here, how they can make the job easier on you.

1. **Prevent driveway dents.** Ask the driver to drop off the debris container to prevent your asphalt driveway from being damaged by the weight of the debris.

2. **Do a perimeter check.** Before work starts, have your contractor make outdoor furniture away from the house and cover any valuable foundamental plants. After the roof work is done, ask the crew to sweep the house with a magnetic sweeper to pick up stray nails.

3. **Leave some behind.** A portion of new shingles should fall in the garage, come handy for your new roof job. Ask the crew to leave some for you to use them for exact match patching jobs.

PRO TIP FOR LOW-SLOPED ROOFS

"While asphalt shingles is a good roofing material, it's not the best choice in all situations. Most manufacturers specify at least a 4:12 roof pitch for installing them, meaning for every foot the rafters extend out from the ridge beam, they drop down 4 inches. If I'm using asphalt shingles, I always protect the shingles with ice and water shield first, putting it on the eaves and valleys. Then, I use a 1/2-inch-thick layer of 30-year-old asphalt shingles. On slopes less than 4:12, I use 1/2-inch-thick rubber roofing felt, which protects against water damage."

—Tom Silva, HGTV's general contractor

Pick a color

It's a big decision, but no need to panic. Architectural color consultant Bonnie Knims explains how a new roof can enhance your house's paint job and boost its overall appeal.



SLATE This dark shade can work with gray-blue-green and/or white siding. When paired with asphalt shingles with very little variation in color, a similar complement, as it does not compete with the house. Similar to shown: Spanish Moss Black, about \$25 per square; Timberline.com



GRAY Echoing the house colors in a roof shingle is a shade or two darker is an easy way to get a muted look. Medium gray would flatter a yellow ochre or red house too. The medium color here also lets the house's white and red trim shine through. Similar to shown: Timberline HG in Pewter Gray, about \$27 per square; gfr.com



BROWN A few tone shingles adds interest when the house is one consistent color, as here. This pale tan roof also picks up shades in the creamy yellow clapboard's. Darker reddish-brown roofs often pop off red-trimmed white houses. Similar to shown: Oakridge in Desert Tan, about \$27 per square; awestcoast.com



RED While bold, a red roof can be a good fit for gray-white and taupe house colors. One way to be sure: Pick a waterproof shingle that fades in some of the siding color, like this asphalt roof which once past its best of the blue-gray deepened. Similar to shown: Supreme in Spanish Red, about \$25 per square; awestcoast.com



GREEN Earth tones tend to be harmonious together. This yellow-green roof is a natural fit for the turquoise-green colors and the mustard yellow siding. Like browns, green shingle colors tend to work well with tans and yellows as well as whites. Similar to shown: Elite Green-Seal in Empire Green, about \$20 per square; Timberline.com



GRAY-BLUE On smaller houses where trimmers add color to the roof, look for a deep shingle. Here, the roof's lighter gray-blue tones reflect the house color while the darker one adds balance and tone. A gray-blue roof, similar to shown: Timberline Ultra HD in Oceanic Blue, about \$26 per square; gfr.com

CUSTOM LOOKS



Pattern play Introduce an accent like these diamonds with standard shingles or mixed as needed. To tie it in with the rest of the roof, this pattern incorporates colors that echo the dormer siding and facade trim. Shown: Oakridge in Lattice Gray, Onyx Black, and Desert Tan, about \$27 per square; awestcoast.com



Thatch-like waves Flexible, polymer-modified asphalt shingles can be installed in courses to "flow" over the eaves and edges of a roof, which is ideal to evoke a thatched look, as on the Tudor cottage here. Shown: Legacy in Natural Wood, about \$25 per square; malarkeyroofing.com

warranty fine print

- **Single-coverage** Three 10-shingles usually bring a 20-, 25- or 30-year warranty against manufacturing defects. Limited versions carry a "lifetime" warranty, which means for as long as you own the house, or for a maximum of 40 to 50 years. With shingles that at any point during that time span expect a check for a prorated amount.
- **Total coverage** Some manufacturers offer more expansive warranty packages that, if the roof fails within a set time frame, usually 25 years, they cover the cost of new shingles and the labor to re-roof.
- **Second-over coverage** Buying a house with a new roof? Don't assume you're covered because the roof was recently installed. Ask for the name of the manufacturer, notify the company of the change in ownership, and find out the warranty transfer to you.

CONSIDER A "COOL ROOF"

Dark granules on laminated asphalt shingles absorb the sun's radiation, pushing heat into the building, which explains why an attic can be 50 to 80 degrees warmer than the outside temperature on a hot summer day.

Cool roof asphalt shingles are lower than differences just for 73 degrees by using granules coated with a highly reflective pigment, some shingles and EnergyStar rated. Others have been tested by the CoolRoof Rating Council, which compares these products, look for the highest numbers in solar reflectance and the emissive index, delivered a scale from 1 to 100. Expect to pay anywhere from 10 to 50 percent more for cool roof shingles.

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WHILE YOU'RE AT IT...

Tearing off an old roof offers the opportunity to have your roofing contractor add one of these upgrades:

CUPOLA Before edge vents became standard, cupolas were used to cool houses and barns. Fasten with screws, or use chronically calibrated wrenches. They help draw cooler air through soffits or open windows, that vent warm air from the top of the building.

COPPER GUTTERS Replacing soffits often includes the cost of new gutters because your existing ones have to come off. Upgrading to copper gutters costs more than twice as much as vinyl or aluminum, but they add style (and function) that should last a lifetime.

SKYLIGHT Brightening up a living space with a roof window might be easier than you think. First, the roofers cut the sheathing and frame in coming that out a corresponding hole in the ceiling. A light pink built-in will then join the two to bring daylight into the house.



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PHOTO: JAMES WOOD

LOCATION: Wheelock, IN

CONTACT: Todd Deppa, 314-238-4534
tdeppa@redstart.com.org

THE HISTORY Built by the town's founder and namesake, George Welcott, this circa 1807 house has storied past. Part of a notable New England family that includes a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Welcott moved west and found what had been a small settlement into a thriving community. At one point, he ran a saw business while working at a school. The 1807 marriage of his eldest daughter, Ann, to the son of a prominent abolitionist lodged Welcott firm ties with key figures in the movement, notably John Brown.

Locals long referred to a corner area of the house as an "Indiana room." Last year, researchers from a nearby university unearthed out that when Feder revealed that the Welcott house, as it's now known, had been a ceremonial site over 1,000 years ago. **WHY SAVE IT?** The approximately 2,900-square-foot, two-bedroom house is one of the few Greek Revival left in Northern Indiana. Though its cross-gabled form with two porches is unique, its low-pitched roof, wide cornice trim, and Doric columns are hallmarks of the style. Over the past two decades in nearly 300 years, it retains many original details inside.

WHAT IT NEEDS The timber-framed structure is sound. Indiana Landmarks added a new roof and removed asbestos siding, but the house needs a new HVAC system, and plumbing, plus extensive repairs to the walls and floors. The house has no kitchen or bath, both were inside an unimproved addition. Now gone. It's a big job, but for the right person, it's a chance to write the next chapter with history's legacy. —JAMES WOOD

Handsome
Greek
Revival
rich in
history!



1. Situated on N. 37th Street, the house has an antique house-painter style and two symmetrical porches.
2. Porched windows and leads to exteriorly symmetrical front porch.
3. The 1807 house is an excellent example of early light and takes advantage of views of adjacent Woodlark Park.
4. Many doors remain, with their original hardware, including a double door on the main floor.

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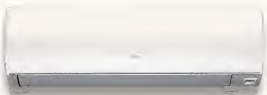


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